

Will & Marlowe

ACT ONE

Scene One

(Will's room.)

[MUSIC NO. 1: "OPENING – MARLOWE'S THEME"]

(WILL is writing at his desk.)

WILL. Shall I compare...

Shall I compare...

Shall I compare...the...um...

Shall I compare thee...

Shall I compare thee to a...to a...?

Shall I compare thee to a...sum...a sum...a something,
something...

Damn it.

Shall I compare thee to a mummer's play?

Shall I compare thee...to...an autumn morning? An
afternoon in springtime? Zounds.

(MARLOWE enters.)

MARLOWE. A sonnet. I thought you were writing a play.

WILL. A month overdue to Henslowe but nothing comes.

I have lost my gift, Kit. I don't know what it is. My
quill is broken, my well is dry. The proud tower of the
imagination hath collapsed completely.

MARLOWE. Interesting. And how are your marital
relations, Will?

WILL. The Hathaways?

MARLOWE. The bedroom.

WILL. As cold as her heart.

MARLOWE. So you are free to love.

WILL. Yet not to write so it seems. Leave me, Kit.

MARLOWE. I've almost finished my new play for Burbage.
More blood and thunder but he pays well for it. I hear
he plays your *Two Gentlemen of Verona* for Her Majesty
this very afternoon.

WILL. My play, for the Queen!

MARLOWE. A summer's day.

WILL. What?

MARLOWE. "A summer's day." Start with something lovely,
temperate, and thoroughly trite. Gives you somewhere
to go.

(MARLOWE leaves.)

WILL. (*unconvinced*) A summer's day?!

Shall I compare thee...to a...summer's day? Mmmm?

Thou art more...something something something...

Henslowe, Fennyman, Frees, Lambert

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

11

Scene Two

(The Rose Theatre.)

[MUSIC NO. 2: "THE HENCHMEN"]

(LAMBERT and FREES have HENSLOWE over hot coals as FENNYMAN looks on.)

HENSLOWE. Arrrrgghhh!!!!

FENNYMAN. You mongrel! Why do you howl when it is I who am bitten? What am I, Mister Lambert?

LAMBERT. Bitten, Mister Fennyman.

FENNYMAN. How badly, Mister Frees?

FREES. Twelve pounds, one shilling, and fourpence, Mister Fennyman, plus interest.

HENSLOWE. I can pay you!

FENNYMAN. When? Mister Henslowe?

HENSLOWE. Two weeks. Three at the most. Aaagh. For pity's sake.

FENNYMAN. Drop him.

HENSLOWE. Aaaaggh!

FENNYMAN. Where will you get...

FREES. Sixteen pounds, five shillings, and ninepence...

HENSLOWE. I have a wonderful new play!

FENNYMAN. A play?

HENSLOWE. A play, Mister Fennyman.

FENNYMAN. Let him have it.

HENSLOWE. Aaaaggh! It's a comedy.

FENNYMAN. Cut off his nose.

HENSLOWE. Aaaaggh! A new comedy.

FENNYMAN. And his ear.

HENSLOWE. By Will Shakespeare.

FENNYMAN. Who?

HENSLOWE. His *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is to be played for the Queen at Whitehall today, acted by Richard Burbage and the Chamberlain's Men.

FENNYMAN. Shakespeare? Never heard of him.

HENSLOWE. I think he has potential. We will be partners, Mister Fennyman.

FENNYMAN. Partners?

HENSLOWE. The play's a crowd tickler – mistaken identities, a shipwreck, a pirate king, a bit with a dog, and love triumphant.

FREES. Didn't you see that one, Lambert?

LAMBERT. Yeah, and I didn't like it.

HENSLOWE. Aaaaggh! But this time it is by Shakespeare.

FENNYMAN. What's it called?

HENSLOWE. *Romeo and Ethel the Pirate's Daughter*.

FENNYMAN. Good title. A play takes time. Find actors... rehearsals, let's say open in three weeks. That's – what – five hundred groundlings at tuppence each, in addition four hundred backsides at three pence – a penny extra for a cushion, call it two hundred cushions, say two performances for safety. How much is that, Mister Frees?

FREES. Twenty pounds to the penny.

FENNYMAN. Correct!

HENSLOWE. But I have to pay the actors and the author.

FENNYMAN. A share of the profits.

HENSLOWE. There's never any profits.

FENNYMAN. Of course not!

HENSLOWE. Mister Fennyman, I think you may have hit on something.

FENNYMAN. Sign here.

HENSLOWE. It's blank.

FENNYMAN. I know.

Peter as Valentine

16

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

HENSLOWE. Cut out my heart – feed my liver to the dogs!

WILL. I'll take that as a no, then.

HENSLOWE. I'm a dead man and buggered to boot. I hear Burbage has a brand new Christopher Marlowe for the Curtain and I have nothing for the Rose. When will I get it, Will?

WILL. As soon as I have found my muse.

HENSLOWE. Who is it this time?

WILL. It is always Aphrodite.

HENSLOWE. Aphrodite Baggott who does it behind the Dog and Biscuit?

VALENTINE.

What light is light, if Silvia be not seen?

What joy is joy, if Silvia be not by?

(The DOG enters and jumps up to VALENTINE.)

Unless it be to think that she is by

And feed—

(The DOG is causing problems.)

—upon the shadow of perfection.

(The QUEEN and the COURT laugh uproariously.)

BURBAGE enters.)

BURBAGE. Spot! Spot! Out, damn Spot!

(BURBAGE finally removes the DOG. HENSLOWE intently watches the audience.)

HENSLOWE. See. Comedy. That's what they want. Love and a bit with a dog.

WILL. I refuse to watch this shambles.

(WILL starts to leave.)

HENSLOWE. Where are you going?

WILL. To hang myself. Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me in a grave pit.

only
this

Viola & Nurse

18

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

Scene Five

(De Lesseps Hall, Viola's bedroom.)

[MUSIC NO. 5: "BED ARRIVES"]

(VIOLA is performing for an imaginary audience.)

VIOLA.

What light is light, if Silvia be not seen?
What joy is joy, if Silvia be not by?
Unless it be to think that she is by
And feed upon the shadow of perfection.

MUSICIANS. *(sung)*

O, STAY AND HEAR! YOUR TRUE LOVE'S COMING,
THAT CAN SING BOTH HIGH AND LOW.

VIOLA.

Except I be by Silvia in the night,
There is no music in the nightingale;
Unless I look on Silvia in the day,
There is no day for me to look upon.

Such poetry...

(Viola's NURSE enters.)

...But how can one care for Silvia while she is – by
the order of the Lord Chamberlain – played by a
pipsqueak boy in petticoats!

NURSE. I liked the dog.

VIOLA. Stage love will never be real love until we women
can be onstage ourselves. Yet when can we see
another?

NURSE. When the Queen commands it.

VIOLA. But at the playhouse.

NURSE. Playhouses are not for well-born ladies.

VIOLA. I am not so well-born.

NURSE. Well-monied is the same as well-born these days
and well-married better than both. Lord Wessex was
looking at you tonight.

VIOLA. All the men at court are without poetry. If they
look at me they see my father's fortune. I will have
poetry in my life. And adventure. And love. Love
above all.

NURSE. Like Valentine and Silvia?

VIOLA. No – not the artful postures of love, but the love
that overthrows life. Unbiddable, ungovernable, like a
riot in the heart, and nothing to be done, come ruin
or rapture. Love like there has never been in a play. I
will have love or I will end my days –

NURSE. As a nurse?

VIOLA. But I would be Valentine and Silvia too, somehow.
Good Nurse, God save you and good night. I would
stay asleep my whole life if I could dream myself into a
company of players.

Henslowe, Fennyman, Ralph, Lambert,

20

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

Frees, Nol, Will & Marlowe

Scene Six

(Tavern.)

[MUSIC NO. 6: "TAVERN"]

(A WAITER calls out while RALPH attends HENSLOWE.)

WAITER. Calves' head with oysters and the coxcomb tartlet, table nine.

RALPH. Ah, Mister Henslowe. How goes it, sir?

HENSLOWE. Very well. Very well, Ralph, my good man. Some food and drink.

RALPH. Well, the special today is a pig's foot marinated in juniper berry vinegar served with a buckwheat pancake and a burdock salad.

HENSLOWE. I'll have a pie and pint. And have one for yourself, Master Ralph.

(FENNYMAN enters with LAMBERT and FREES.)

FENNYMAN. Next time we take your boots off.

LAMBERT. Get him!

FREES. Over the table, mate.

FENNYMAN. Stretch him!

HENSLOWE. Mister Fennyman. What have I done?

FENNYMAN. That is the question. Nothing. *(turning to the MUSICIANS)* Shut it! *(to HENSLOWE)* Why haven't you started?

HENSLOWE. Oh, it's all taken care of, gentlemen. It all takes time.

FENNYMAN. Where is the manuscript, Mister Henslowe?

HENSLOWE. A manuscript. Let me explain about the theatre business. The natural condition is one of insurmountable obstacles on the road to imminent disaster. One must never expect a manuscript at this

stage. That is an impediment to look forward to. But it always works out in the end.

FENNYMAN. How?

HENSLOWE. I don't know. It's a mystery.

FENNYMAN. No pirates – you're a dead man. Come on.

(FENNYMAN exits with LAMBERT and FREES.)

[MUSIC NO. 7: "TAVERN – UNDERSCORE"]

RALPH. Did I hear you have a play, Mister Henslowe?

(WILL enters and, avoiding HENSLOWE, makes his way to the bar.)

HENSLOWE. Shakespeare is writing as we speak.

RALPH. Is there anything for me?

HENSLOWE. You're a perfect Pirate King, Ralph, but I hear you are a drunken sot.

RALPH. Never when I'm working.

(NOL approaches.)

NOL. What about me, Mister Henslowe?

HENSLOWE. And there's a nice little part for you, Master Nol.

NOL. Thank you very much.

RALPH. What about the money?

HENSLOWE. It won't cost you a penny. We will all share the profits. Auditions this afternoon.

WILL. Auditions?

HENSLOWE. Will.

WILL. Where are your usual men?

HENSLOWE. With Ned Alleyn in the provinces. God knows when they will return. We cannot delay. We need bodies, Will.

WILL. But not these pickled hams.

HENSLOWE. Auditions round the back in five minutes.
If you are not there, Will, I will cast it myself. Ralph,
bring the pie round.

(HENSLOWE leaves with NOL in tow. WILL goes
to the bar.)

WILL. Give me to drink mandragora.

(MARLOWE enters.)

BARMAN. Straight up?

MARLOWE. Bring my friend a beaker of your best brandy.

BARMAN. Yes, Mister Marlowe.

MARLOWE. How goes it, Will?

WILL. Wonderful, wonderful. Most wonderful.

MARLOWE. Burbage says you're also writing him a play!

WILL. I have the chinks to show for it. (*puts down a coin for
the drinks*) I insist, and a beaker for Mister Marlowe.
And how is yours?

MARLOWE. Just finished. My best since *Faustus*.

WILL. I love your early work. This time?

MARLOWE. *The Massacre at Paris*. And yours?

WILL. *Romeo and Ethel the Pirate's Daughter*. (*off MARLOWE's
response*) Yes, I know.

MARLOWE. What's the story?

WILL. Well, there's this pirate...In truth I haven't written a
word.

MARLOWE. Well, Romeo is...Italian.

WILL. Marvellous.

MARLOWE. Always in and out of love.

WILL. That's good. Until he meets...

MARLOWE. Ethel.

WILL. Really?

MARLOWE. Juliet.

WILL. Juliet?

MARLOWE. The daughter of his enemy.

WILL. The daughter of his enemy.

MARLOWE. His best friend is killed in a duel by Juliet's brother or something. His name is Mercutio.

WILL. Mercutio. Good name. What happens to Ethel?

MARLOWE. Marries a blackamoor and is strangled with a handkerchief?

WILL. Inspired. Thank you, Kit.

NOL. Will, Mister Henslowe is about to start the auditions for Romeo.

MARLOWE. I thought the play was for Burbage?

WILL. That's a different one.

MARLOWE. A different one you haven't written?

WILL. (*calling off*) Next!

Wessex ; Sir Robert De Lesseps

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

29

Scene Nine

(Inside De Lesseps Hall, decorated for a ball. The COMPANY dances. Out of the action emerges a conversation between WESSEX and SIR ROBERT DE LESSEPS.)

WESSEX. Where is she, Sir Robert? I am starting to wonder if she is a mythical beast of your invention.

DE LESSEPS. She will come, I assure you. She is a beauty, My Lord, as would take a king to church for a dowry of nutmeg.

WESSEX. My plantations in Virginia are not mortgaged for a nutmeg. I have an ancient name that will bring you preferment when your grandson is a Wessex. Is she fertile?

DE LESSEPS. She will breed. If she do not, send her back.

WESSEX. And obedient?

DE LESSEPS. As any mule in Christendom. But if you are the man to ride her, there are rubies in the saddle.

WESSEX. I like her.

DE LESSEPS. Come, she will be down any moment.

Sam, Webster, Will, Fennyman, Ned ; Burbage, Henslowe

42

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

HENSLOWE. I think he has potential.

WILL. This is a shambles.

HENSLOWE. I think we should get started.

WILL. Gentlemen! Good men all.

HENSLOWE. *(to FENNYMAN)* It is customary to make a little speech on the first day. It does no harm and the authors like it.

WILL. Firstly, gentlemen, I want to thank you all for coming here today. I am honoured to be working with such an extraordinary calibre of actor. Today we are about to embark upon a mysterious journey, a journey which—

FENNYMAN. I'll speak the speech.

WILL. I haven't quite finished.

FENNYMAN. Shut it! Now you listen to me, you dregs! Actors are ten a penny and I, Hugh Fennyman, hold your nuts in my hand so—

(Noise from offstage. Suddenly, a group of ACTORS enter, headed by NED ALLEYN – a handsome, piratical figure with a big voice.)

NED. Huzzah! I am returned!

FENNYMAN. Excuse me, I was speaking the speech.

NED. Silence, you dog. I hear there is a play for me.

FENNYMAN. Who are you, sir?

NED. Who am I? I am Hieronimo! I am Tamburlaine! I am Faustus! I am Barabas the Jew – oh yes, Master Will, and I was Henry the Sixth – several times. *(to FENNYMAN)* Who are you, sir?

FENNYMAN. I am the money.

NED. Then you may remain, as long as you remain silent. Congratulations, sir. Your investment is safe in the hands of...

ACTORS. Ned Alleyn!

NED. What is the play? What is my part?

WILL. We are in desperate want of a Mercutio, Ned, a young nobleman of Verona.

NED. Verona, again. And what is the title?

WILL. *Mercutio*.

NED. I will play him! Divide the rest betwixt the boys and watch how genius creates a legend.

WILL. (*handing out parts*) Master Pope! Master Phillips! Master Hemmings! Master Condell! Master Tooley! Master Wabash! Master Noll! Sam, my pretty one! Are you ready to fall in love again?

SAM. I am, Master Shakespeare.

WILL. But your voice...have they dropped?

SAM. No, no, a touch of cold.

FENNYMAN. Actually, Master Shakespeare, I saw his Tamburlaine. Wonderful.

WILL. Oh, yes...

FENNYMAN. Of course, it was mighty writing. There is no one quite like Marlowe.

WILL. No indeed. Mister Henslowe, you have your actors. Except for Thomas Kent. (*to WEBSTER*) Are you still here, boy?

WEBSTER. I was in one of your plays before. They cut my head off in *Titus Andronicus*. When I write plays they will be like *Titus*.

WILL. You liked it?

WEBSTER. No. But I like it when they cut heads off. And the daughter mutilated with knives. Plenty of blood. That's the only writing.

NED. Will...where is Mercutio?

WILL. I am saving my best for him. I leave the scene in your safe-keeping, Ned. Cut round – what's his name – Romeo, for now.

NED. Who?

WILL. Nobody. Mercutio's friend. (*turns to find KENT*)
Master Kent! I almost didn't recognise you.

HENSLOWE. Places, please.

NED. Gather around, gentlemen.

(*Enter BURBAGE.*)

BURBAGE. Shakespeare!

HENSLOWE. Oh God!

BURBAGE. You cur. I thought I'd find you here. Where's
Ethel?

WILL. Who?

BURBAGE. The pirate's daughter I paid two sovereigns
for... (*sees NED*) Mister Alleyn.

NED. Mister Burbage.

BURBAGE. The Prince of the Provinces.

NED. The Scourge of the Suburbs.

BURBAGE. Where is my play, Shakespeare? I have postered
half of Shoreditch and I haven't seen a single page.

WILL. They're coming, they're coming.

BURBAGE. If you've sold my play to Henslowe I will slice
you nape to chops. What play is this, Alleyn?

NED. *Mercutio.*

HENSLOWE. Out of this theatre, you over-ripe ham. We are
trying to rehearse.

BURBAGE. My play, Shakespeare, or I will do such things –
I know not what they are – but they shall be the terrors
of all Shoreditch.

(*Exit BURBAGE.*)

NED. ...they shall be the terrors of all Shoreditch...

HENSLOWE. Gentlemen. Romeo laments his Ethel.

WILL. May I, Mister Alleyn?

Wessex, Viola & Nurse

48

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

Scene Fourteen

(De Lesseps Hall.)

[MUSIC NO. 15: "INTO BEDROOM"]

(VIOLA is still in her costume. NURSE enters.)

NURSE. My Lady. My Lady. My Lady. Where have you been? Lord Wessex is waiting for you. He's waiting downstairs. Quickly, you must change.

(VIOLA runs offstage to change.)

VIOLA. *(from offstage)* How long has he been here?

NURSE. All morning.

VIOLA. What did you tell him?

NURSE. I told him you were at prayer, My Lady.

VIOLA. For four hours?

NURSE. I said you were pious, My Lady.

VIOLA. Why is he here today?

NURSE. You know perfectly well, My Lady.

(Enter WESSEX.)

WESSEX. Nurse. Nurse! Where is the future Lady Wessex?

NURSE. You must have patience, sir. My Lady is still in the act of contemplation.

WESSEX. Lengthy orisons for one so young.

NURSE. She always was a pious little girl, My Lord. My mistress is the sweetest lady, My Lord, and still as pious. Lord, Lord, even when she was a prating child, sir, she would spend hours on her knees. I used to swear she'd wear them out!

WESSEX. Oh, for heaven's sake, where the devil is she?!

(VIOLA runs back on, fully dressed.)

NURSE. My Lady, My Lady, Lord Wessex is here...

(Just in time, NURSE whips off VIOLA's moustache.)

WESSEX. My Lady.

VIOLA. Lord Wessex. You have been waiting.

WESSEX. I am aware of it. It is beauty's privilege. Though four hours' prayer is less piety than self-importance. I have spoken to the Queen. Her Majesty's consent is requisite when a Wessex takes a wife, and once gained, her consent is her command.

VIOLA. Do you intend to marry, My Lord?

WESSEX. Your father should keep you better informed. He has bought me for you. He returns from his estates to see us married two weeks from Saturday. You are allowed to show your pleasure.

VIOLA. But I do not love you, My Lord.

WESSEX. How your mind hops about! Your father was a shopkeeper, your children will bear a coat of arms, and I will recover my fortune. That is the only matter under discussion today. You will like Virginia.

VIOLA. Virginia?

WESSEX. Why, yes! My fortune lies in my plantations. The tobacco weed. I need four thousand pounds to fit out a ship and put my investments to work – I fancy tobacco has a future. We will not stay there long, three or four years.

VIOLA. But why me?

WESSEX. It was your eyes. No, your lips.

(WESSEX kisses VIOLA with more passion than ceremony. VIOLA slaps him.)

Will you defy your father and your Queen?

VIOLA. The Queen has consented?

WESSEX. She wants to inspect you. At Greenwich, come Sunday. Be submissive, modest, grateful. And on time.

(WESSEX leaves.)

VIOLA. My summer's lease is all too brief. Bring me pen and ink. I must write to William Shakespeare.

Queen, Tilney; Viola, Wessex

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

69

TILNEY. Your Majesty. The Lady Viola de Lesseps.

VIOLA. Your Majesty.

QUEEN. Stand up straight, girl. (*examines VIOLA*) I have seen you. You are the one who comes to all the plays... at Whitehall, at Richmond.

VIOLA. Your Majesty.

QUEEN. What do you love so much?

VIOLA. Your Majesty...?

QUEEN. Speak out! I know who I am. Do you love stories of kings and queens? Feats of arms? Or is it courtly love?

VIOLA. I love theatre. To have stories acted for me by a company of fellows is indeed—

QUEEN. They are not acted for you, they are acted for me.

(*Obsequious laughter from the COURT.*)

And...?

VIOLA. I love poetry above all.

QUEEN. Above Lord Wessex? My Lord, when you cannot find your wife you had better look for her at the playhouse.

TILNEY. Hardly a place for a young lady of breeding, Your Majesty.

QUEEN. Oh, I am all for the theatre, Mister Tilney. But playwrights teach nothing about love; they make it pretty, they make it comical, or they make it lust. They cannot make it true.

VIOLA. Oh, but they can!

(*A gasp from the COURT.*)

TILNEY. Her Majesty is not in the habit of being contradicted.

VIOLA. I mean...Your Majesty, they do not, they have not, but I believe there is one who can.

(*Horried, WESSEX rushes to intervene.*)

WESSEX. Lady Viola is...young in the world. Your Majesty is wise in it. Nature and truth are the very enemies of playacting. I'll wager my fortune.

QUEEN. I thought you were here because you had none. Well, will anyone take Lord Wessex up on his wager? Mister Tilney?

TILNEY. The Lord Chamberlain cannot be seen to gamble, Your Majesty.

QUEEN. Lady Viola, it seems no one will risk this wager.

~~WILL, still in disguise. Fifty pounds.~~

QUEEN. I hear from somewhere fifty pounds. A very worthy sum on a very worthy question. Can a play show us the very truth and nature of love? I bear witness to the wager, and will be the judge of it as occasion arises.

TILNEY. A conceit of genius, Your Majesty.

(TILNEY leads a scatter of applause.)

QUEEN. I have not seen anything to settle it yet. So. The fireworks will be soothing after the excitements of Lady Viola's audience. *(intimately, to WESSEX)* Have her then, but you are a lordly fool. She has been plucked since I saw her last and not by you. It takes a woman to know it.

WESSEX. *(aside)* Marlowe. I will kill the wretch.

[MUSIC NO. 27: "VIVAT REGINA - EXIT"]

(WESSEX turns to watch the fireworks just beginning. There are gasps from the CROWD at each explosion. WILL, still in disguise, pulls VIOLA aside.)

WILL. Viola, Viola! I must away to my pages. I will see you at the theatre.

VIOLA. Please, Will, be careful.

WILL. Don't worry, no one will recognise me here.

Molly, Kate, Fennyman, Viola/Kent Will, Sam, Henslowe

78

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

Scene Four

(Tavern/Brothel. The ACTORS celebrate with MOLLY and KATE, tavern whores, as MUSICIANS play.)

FENNYMAN. Gentlemen, actors, swordsmen. You are welcome. *(to MUSICIANS)* Shut it. *(to ACTORS)* Gentlemen! The kegs and legs, open and on me. Everything, and I mean everything, is on the house.

(Cheers.)

MOLLY. Brace yourself, Kate.

FENNYMAN. Sam, I think it is time you sampled the delights of a real, living, breathing lady.

MOLLY. You send that little one up here to me.

FENNYMAN. Off you go.

(SAM heads towards MOLLY.)

VIOLA/KENT. I thought this was a tavern.

WILL. It is also a tavern.

VIOLA/KENT. This is a house of ill repute.

WILL. But of good reputation. Come, there's no harm in drink.

(KATE straddles WILL.)

KATE. I remember you! The poet.

WILL. Must have been someone else. Thomas Dekker, perchance?

KATE. No, I remember – you have a silver tongue.

VIOLA/KENT. Excuse me, we are trying to have a civilised conversation.

KATE. *(taking an interest in KENT)* Now here's a pretty one!

VIOLA/KENT. Excuse me, darling, I'm trying to have a drink.

FENNYMAN. Master Kent! Will you not dip your wick, sir?

VIOLA/KENT. My wick?

WILL. Mister Fennyman! We were in fact discussing your great love of the theatre, and Master Kent suggested you should have a part in the play.

FENNYMAN. Me?!

WILL. I am writing an Apothecary, a small but vital role.

FENNYMAN. By heaven I thank you. I will play...no, no, I will be your Apothecary. I am to be in the play!

KATE. What's this play about then?

RALPH. Well, there's this nurse...

(SAM reappears with MOLLY – a huge smile on his face.)

NOL. Oy, oy! He's back.

MOLLY. It was very quick.

SAM. It was very quick. But I liked it.

(Cheers.)

FENNYMAN. Come, Sam, take some ale. Mister Henslowe, Mister Shakespeare has given me the part of the Apothecary.

HENSLowe. The Apothecary? What about the shipwreck? How does it end, Will?

WILL. By God, I wish I knew.

HENSLowe. I paid for pirates, clowns, and a happy end. If I don't get reconciliations and a jig I will send you back to Stratford...to your wife!!

VIOLA/KENT. Wife?!

WILL. Erm...

HENSLowe. And the twins!

WILL. *(to VIOLA)* I can explain. I was only eighteen. My marriage is long dead and buried in Stratford. Everything I am is here in London. With you.

Wabash

94

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

WILL. Good luck, Sam.

(SAM makes a long, deep growling sound.)

Sam?!?

HENSLOWE. All those expectant faces. Expecting a man with a dog. Never mind, eh? Good luck everybody.

(The COMPANY ritually touches hands.)

COMPANY. One, two, three...to silence.

HENSLOWE. Off we go.

WILL. Good luck, Mister Wabash.

WABASH. Break a leg yourself, W...W...W...Will.

HENSLOWE. I think he'll be fine. Music, trumpets!

(Fanfare.)

[MUSIC NO. 35: "R&J PROLOGUE"]

And...the Chorus. Mister Wabash, on you go.

(The scene flips front, facing the audience.

WABASH is agonisingly alone on stage. An awful pause.)

WABASH. T-t-t-t-t- *(stops and decides to have another go)* T-t-t-t-t t-t-t-t-t-t-t-t-twooooo...h-h-households b-both alike in d-d-d-ignity. *(suddenly finds his voice and is wonderfully fluent)*

In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife...

[MUSIC NO. 36: "R&J PROLOGUE END"]

(The scene flips to backstage.)

HENSLOWE. It's a mystery, Mister Shakespeare. A mystery.

(WABASH collapses, overcome.)

Burbage

88

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

WABASH. Y-y-y-y-y-you w-w-were w-w-w-wonderful.

WILL. Wait! Take this and remember me.

(WILL takes the manuscript and gives it to
VIOLA.)

WESSEX. Viola!

(VIOLA leaves with WESSEX.)

WEBSTER. (to WILL) Should've let me play Ethel then,
shouldn't ya.

(WEBSTER exits. FENNYMAN arrives in his blue
cap.)

FENNYMAN. Everything all right?

HENSLOWE. Closed before we opened. Let's pack
everything up.

BURBAGE. Hold!

HENSLOWE. Oh God!

BURBAGE. Enemies. Brothers. Lend me your ears. We
may indeed be rivals in art but we are jointly despised
as vagrants, tinkers, peddlers of bombast. Which
in my case might be true. But— (to MUSICIANS)
Gentlemen...

(The MUSICIANS start to play:)

[MUSIC NO. 32: "BURBAGE"]

...my father James Burbage had the first licence
to form a company of players and he drew from
all the poets of the age. Their fame will be our
fame. So let them all know, we are men of parts.
We are a fraternity, and we will be a profession.
Will Shakespeare has a play. I have a theatre. To be
frank the posters are already posted. Damn the Lord
Chamberlain. The Curtain is yours.

HENSLOWE. There is no time to be lost. We will play *Romeo*
this Saturday at the Curtain.

only
this